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THE SKATERS' GROUND.

THE merry skaters swarm the frozen floor
Of the blue lake ; or, round the dim white shore,
The opalescent grotts and dells explore.

Where the bird sang, and hummed the golden bee,
And perfumes dripped from every bloomy tree,
And winds shed balm, and breath was ecstasy,—

Where the rich vine, from gold-grained rocks that hung,
Its quivering tendrils to the water swung
And clasped its shadow-twin the shells among,—

Old Winter, stoled in snow, sits in his prime ;
And gleam the tintless pearls of winter rime,
Where still, flame-touched, the ivies cling and climb.

Where erst the silver-breasted swan upbore
His plumy wings and dipped his black-webbed oar,
With rosy beak turned toward the summer shore,—

The steel-shod skaters poise their glinting blades
From the white hazes of the gemmy shades,
And reeling, swarm the glassy esplanades ;

Or spin in gyres fantastic — skim and wheel ;
While in the wake of each receding heel
The ice-dust feathers round the tinnient steel,

'Neath arches crusted with the curdled snow,
With iridescent pendants thick below,
And gilded with the beamy sun's white glow,—

Round dazzling isles where frozen ripples curl,
And trees, gem-crusted, to the light winds' swirl,
Shake scentless petals from each bough of pearl,—

Until the azure crystalline is strown
With grotesque grooves ; and every furrow sown
With silver dust from winged runners thrown,—

The skaters skim upon their humming blades
Till twilight falls, and the white moon invades
The pearly hazes of the glittering shades.

— *Ettie Rogers.*

AT NORTH CONWAY.

"I THINK you said—" There was a startled look on the pleasant face of the much-enduring waitress as she bent a little lower ; and certainly the order which she had received, "Miss Sylvester and dipped toast," was rather a novel one. "I don't think I understood you, sir."

"I beg your pardon," said Philip van Dorne, coming back to the contemplation of his supper with a sudden start, and blushing like a school-boy as he became conscious of his mistake ; and then, as the relieved damsel sped away, her evident fears as to his lapse from sanity being quieted by a less difficult order, he glanced again at the distant table where sat the three personages whose advent had so surprised, and, as it appeared, disconcerted him.

Two ladies and a gentleman : one lady tall, pale and dark-eyed, with a wonderful crown of pale gold hair ; the other a mere child in appearance, with a round, piquant, peach-blossom face, wide blue eyes, and her fair hair cut close and curling around her forehead in little babyish rings ; the gentleman a rather grave-looking, but decidedly handsome man, with no peculiarity of look or demeanor that would justify Philip van Dorne in staring at him in such a decidedly vindictive and unprepossessing way.

He watched them furtively until they rose to depart ; but as they passed by he was to all appearance entirely absorbed in the roll with which he had been trifling for the last half hour, and did not raise his eyes.

They noticed him, however, for the younger lady laid her hand suddenly on her companion's arm.

"Look, Rose !" she whispered, "there's Phil van Dorne." And Rose, after one glance, passed on, with her gold-crowned head held a little higher, and her face a little paler than before.

Two minutes later, Philip van Dorne was in the office, hastily running over the list of the new arrivals at the Kearsarge House. Yes, here it was at last : "Mr. and Mrs. Colchester, Miss Sylvester, New York ;" and although he had felt sure of it from the first, the sight of her changed name affected him as he had believed nothing could have done. "Joe

was right, after all," he said, bitterly, as he turned away. "Odd that I should meet them on their wedding journey, though." Very soon he found himself face to face with a gentleman with a lady on either arm.

"Mr. Van Dorne,—how unexpected, and—how pleasant !" It was a wee white hand which was extended to him, and he took it mechanically in his.

"Thank you," he said, his eyes wandering to the tall, lissome figure beside her. "I hardly thought to meet you here, Emmie."

The old pet name came almost unconsciously—Emmie had always been a favorite of his in the old days—and then Rose returned his low bow without removing her hand from the sleeve where it rested.

"Oh, and I beg your pardon,—Mr. Colchester,—Mr. Van Dorne. I believe you have met before, though."

"Yes," answered Philip, grimly, "once or twice only, I think." Emmie, with a little laugh, slipped her pretty hand through his arm.

"Rose, you and Roger lead the way. We will follow." And Philip, finding himself taken possession of, resigned himself to his fate. After all, it was better to face it bravely than to run away ; so, with Emmie on his arm, he joined the promenaders on the wide veranda.

All that long evening he watched that face, that proud, pale face, which had once been to him the only face in all the world. And when at last he sat alone, trying, for once unavailingly, to find solace in a cigar, that pale, proud face seemed still before him.

How he had loved that woman !—how dear she had been to him in the old days ! Yet how little had separated them. A hasty word,—a scornful reply,—and it was over.

He had been greatly to blame. He felt it now, keenly ; but she had been impatient of interference, and imperious and obstinate in her pretty girlish way,—and so, at last—

"Ah, me !" said Phil, tossing his cigar away as he arose, "to think that I should meet her here on her wedding journey, not two years afterward ! There were grounds for jealousy of Colchester, after all ; although I don't think she is madly in love with him. Perhaps that stately, dignified style suits him, though." He thought, gloomily, of the time when that gold-crowned head had rested lightly on his shoulder, in her charming fits of penitence for some misdoing, when those eyes had looked up to him as they looked at no one else, when those lips—

"Confound it all !" he said, wrathfully, "I shall make a fool of myself if I go on in this way. Better leave quietly to-morrow—take the early train, and leave a note of adieux to Emmie." But fate ordered it otherwise ; for, as he went in to his early breakfast, a nod from a curly head, and a wave from a pretty hand, brought him to a seat beside Emmie herself.

"We only stay here to-day, you see," explained the little lady, after the morning greetings were interchanged, "and we want to make the most of it. Therefore this early breakfast ;" and Rose smiled across at her sister in a manner so suggestive of the bright, winsome Rose he used to know, that Phil felt bound to assert to himself that he was in no danger of "making a fool of himself" over another man's wife. "Better face it out," he thought. "It's only to-day anyway, and if I go it will look as though"—as though he had not forgotten old times quite so completely as desirable, he was afraid. Thus deciding, he talked and laughed with Emmie, and was so generally agreeable that even Roger Colchester unbent a little, and the pale face opposite grew interested and appreciative. After breakfast they strolled around after the usual fashion of North Conway visitants, and Philip, having nothing else to do, strolled with them ; but although he strove to seem at ease with Rose, he felt that he failed miserably, and gladly turned to Emmie for relief. She, at least, was unchanged,—just the same childish, winsome Emmie as of old, whom he had been used to pet and tease ; and she had not outgrown her old liking for him, either—that was evident, for she showed it frankly. So he strolled along beside her, and pointed out the

beauties of "Minerva's Head," the shadowy "Indian Maiden," and the famed "White Horse," which, with upraised head and flying mane and tail, seems ever galloping madly away from North Conway and sight-seers in general, but ever remains there, one of the "lions" (pardon the anomaly) of the place. After dinner there was a ride proposed. "Would he go ?" Emmie asked ; there was "just room for four." He went.

Riding backward made Emmie ill. "Would Rose mind ?" No, Rose wouldn't ; and before Philip realized it Rose was sitting beside him. The silken folds of her dress swept against him ; and once, as the carriage swayed heavily, her gloved hand rested on his arm with a swift, light pressure, which made his heart throb strangely.

"I beg your pardon," she said ; and, looking up, her eyes met his for a moment—only a moment ; but as she turned away a sudden wave of crimson swept over her face.

"She has not forgotten, then," he thought grimly, glancing at the two opposite.

Roger Colchester was, to all appearance, unconscious of the little by-play ; but Emmie's blue eyes were a trifle wider than usual, and she was looking at Rose with a sudden surprised curiosity on her face.

All that afternoon Philip was invisible. Taking a full cigar-case as a companion, he set himself resolutely to the task of walking off the new depression and unrest which had come to him.

"I won't see her again," he said. "They go early to-morrow, and I'll keep away from them ;" and, pursuant to this plan, he was one of the latest arrivals at the supper-table, and ate in stately solitude.

When, however, he went out on the broad piazza a little later, and looking through the windows, saw them sitting in the great parlor, he could not resist the temptation to join them. "After all," he said, "it is only to-night, after which she will go out of my life entirely." So he sauntered in, in his lazily graceful way, and took the vacant seat beside Emmie.

"Have you been dancing ?" he asked.

Emmie answered with a little sigh of regret, "No, only twice. Roger doesn't care for it, and there is no one else."

"Take pity on me, then. I am partnerless. May I ?—for the lancers ?" Next moment, with Emmie's hand on his arm, he joined the dancers, and went through the figures "unexceptionably," as Emmie declared ; and later stood beside her, laughing and talking lightly when the dance was over and she had resumed her seat.

"Listen !" she said, as the music began again. "How odd for them to play that,—the saddest of all sad things,—it is the 'Last Waltz of the Madman,' Rose."

Philip hesitated for a moment. Why should he not ? She could but refuse ; and it would be the last time. He turned toward her with a look almost of entreaty on his handsome face. "Will you ?" he said—"Will you, Rose ?"

He had never once called her by her new name—he *could* not—and the old name came so thoughtlessly. "I beg your pardon," he said, gravely. Without reply she rose and laid her hand on his arm.

That waltz,—could he ever forget it ?—with that gold-crowned head almost resting on his shoulder—with that beautiful face so close to his own. For this brief space she was his. At last it came to him suddenly and sharply, that not one particle of the old love had died out, in spite of all his struggles, and the mantle of grim cynicism in which he had striven to envelop his better self : that, Roger Colchester's wife as she was, she was dearer to him than any other woman ever was, or ever could be.

"You are tired," he said, sharply, seeing the sudden pallor of her face as she looked up, wondering at his long silence. "Why did you not tell me ?"

"It is so beautiful," she said, almost in a whisper,—and so sad. Is it not heart-breaking ? There were tears in the great dark eyes as she turned her head away ; but Philip, looking down at her, answered not a word.

"How white you are, Rose!" exclaimed Emmie, as they came back to her. "You should not have danced so long. Why did you let her?"—a little sharply—looking up at Philip. But Rose answered quietly that it was nothing, she was only a little tired, and she had not waltzed for so long,—so very long. She glanced at Philip; and he, meeting her eyes, thought of their last waltz together in the old days.

"The music is over for to-night," said Emmie, gathering her light cloak about her. "Early hours seem to be the rule at the 'Kearsarge,' for the piazza is deserted. It is lovely out there in the moonlight. Come!" And slipping her hand through Roger Colchester's arm, she led the way. "We're going to walk down to the 'Pagoda,'" she proclaimed, after a few minutes, looking back over her shoulder. "One wouldn't think it a prosaic *dépot*, by moonlight. You don't mind our leaving you for a short time, Rose, as you are too tired to go, do you? We'll be back directly." The next moment Rose and Philip were left alone together for the first time.

There was a moment of embarrassing silence as the two disappeared down the wide plank walk; and then Philip began to talk rapidly concerning the scenery, and especially old Kearsarge, as appearing by moonlight, the "cloud-effects" of the previous day, etc., until he saw the shimmering gleam of Emmie's dress in the distance, and knew she was returning. Then he turned to the woman beside him, with a sudden and entire change of manner.

"As you and I go our different ways to-morrow," he said, "I will bid you good-bye to-night; but before I go, I must say one thing which, perhaps, I ought not to say now, but which I ought to have said long ago. If, in the old days, I was domineering and exacting,—as I was,—I most sincerely beg your pardon. We did not part friends,—let us now,—and I wish you every happiness, Mrs. Colchester."

She was standing beside him, a fleecy shawl veiling her head and shoulders, her face turned away from him, and her dark eyes looking up at the far-away crown of Kearsarge; but, as he spoke that last word, she turned quickly, a vivid blush sweeping across her face, and looked up at him with a great wonderment in her wide eyes.

"I was in fault, too," she said, after a little pause, her voice trembling strangely. "I have regretted it bitterly since,—more than you can know,—and I,—Philip!—how could you think it?—I am not Mrs. Colchester. I thought you knew—it is Emmie."

Very soon after, Emmie, returning with her husband, was electrified by the sight of Rose—her proud, stately sister Rose—with her head pillowed on Philip van Dorne's broad shoulder, Philip's strong arm around her, and her beautiful face, no longer pale, but suspiciously rosy, looking up at him in a way which told of happiness and peace at last.

"It is all very well to go seeking one's fortune in foreign lands, Rose," said Philip to his wife, a few months afterward, "but I don't believe in it. I found my fortune (after a long search, though, I must confess) nearer home."

"Where?" asked Rose, looking up at him with a mischievous light in her great dark eyes.

"Under the shadow of Kearsarge, love,—at North Conway—and at the moment when I believed that I was bidding an eternal good-bye to another man's wife, I found my own." —*Florence P. Allen.*

TO OAKY HALL, AS ACTOR.

RIGHT well, for many a day, have you assumed
The needs and woes of others, in that field
Where legal honor oft to fame has bloomed,
And might to right at last been forced to yield.
To-day you change the stage, but not the task:
To feel and act for others, still is yours:
To wear the Thespian, not the legal mask,
And win a different cause by similar lures.
Do but the last as you have done the first,
With loving ardor and determined will,—
And new applause along your way will burst,
A world's retainers trying faith and skill,
While life's great truth once more you celebrate—
The way of doing, not the deed alone, is great.
—*John Hay Furness.*

THE MUSIC SEASON.

THE winter season opened with less flourish of trumpets than usual. Even Strakosch, whose instrument ordinarily is voiced louder than the original box of bad whistles known as the first Jubilee Organ, attuned his melody to a lower key, and piped somewhat modestly, for him, of the musical treasures he intended to import from foreign lands. There was a general feeling of uneasiness, the product of experience and a depressed money market. Strakosch recalled the cogent adage, "A burnt child dreads the fire," and informed the anxious public, indirectly, that if it wanted opera, it might organize a subscription in advance; and when he saw the money paid down he would see the opera put upon the boards in the very best style. Up to the present writing no action has been taken, and we are still without Italian opera.

The leading events of the season have been the appearance of Titiens and Von Bulow. Concerning the first, expectation was on tip-toe. Her great and protracted popularity in England, in concert, oratorio and opera, was well known on this side of the water. Probably no singer in Europe had for so long a period held such sway over her audiences. The apprehensions that age had affected her voice or decreased her powers were met by the fact that she still maintained supremacy on the English stage. So the music-loving public awaited impatiently her arrival, welcomed her with enthusiasm, and crammed the Hall at her first appearance. No audience was ever better disposed to give a prejudiced verdict in favor of a noted songstress. Without attempting a careful analysis of the causes, the result may be summed up in the single word—disappointment. There was in Titiens all of the queenly presence the fame of which had preceded her. But the voice was no longer that which had carried her to the summit of celebrity. Years had worn it; and although, at times, there were glimpses of its earlier fire and brilliancy, it was plain to all that it had passed its prime. But, said the friendly critics, wait until you have heard her in oratorio. The result was the same. The audiences, familiar with the grandeur and magnificence of Parepa-Rosa's musical utterances, drew comparisons unfavorable to Titiens, and wished they had heard her years ago. "But," resumed the friendly and patient critics, "we will wait until we can hear her in opera, where she can 'suit the action to the word, the word to the action;' there is her field, and in that she will show forth the hidden fire." We still hope to see her in opera, and to have our impressions removed. Certainly we feel no pleasure in speaking unfavorably of so notable a singer. It is not her fault that she is growing old; but that she should not have come here until her powers have begun to fail, is certainly her very great misfortune. America is not so far behind Europe in intelligent appreciation of artistic excellence, that it will accept as first class that which is not up to that standard. And we trust that it may be known and understood abroad, that an artist can not succeed here simply because at some time or other he or she *had* a great reputation in Europe.

Of Dr. Von Bulow's performances, one can not speak except in unqualified praise. Although unlike Rubinstein, with whom everybody, of course, sought to compare him, he is, as an executant, fully his equal. Indeed, in the passages requiring extreme delicacy of touch, Von Bulow seemed to us to be the superior of his Russian rival. On the other hand, in grand and majestic compositions, calling for great energy and brilliancy in execution, Rubinstein rose to higher enthusiasm, and carried his hearers with him. With Von Bulow, one forgets the performer, and is wholly absorbed in the performance. With Rubinstein, one is always conscious that he is in the presence of a great genius. And this seems to us to be the distinction between these two most remarkable pianists. The first is a player endowed with the keenest perceptive faculties, apparently intuitive; he sees the composer's meaning as if he were in close communion with him: the greatest difficulties are

overcome with consummate skill and ease. The latter is endowed with true genius. It is manifest in his look and in his actions. That this comparison is just, is evident, when we examine the compositions of the two. Rubinstein will be remembered by his works, not by his performances. Von Bulow will live in memory so long as his playing is not forgotten.

It certainly was unfortunate that the rivalry of two famous piano houses should have prevented Von Bulow from obtaining an orchestra competent to accompany him in the rendition of concertos and other works, which can not be properly interpreted without orchestral aid. It is generally known that this artist came out under the auspices of the Chickering; and it followed, as a matter of course, that he must play and duly advertise the Chickering piano. "Put none but Chickering's pianos on guard to-night," was the general order. "Picket carefully all your outposts. If a Steinway, or a Decker, a Stodart or an Arion approach, shoot it on the spot. Let no one falter! Chickering expects every man to do his duty!"

It happened, very inopportunistically, that the only orchestra which was fully prepared to supplement Von Bulow was under the direction of that irrepressible, and now indispensable conductor, Theodore Thomas. (We beg pardon of our readers for mentioning him so often; but, the fact is, it is well nigh impossible to write of current musical matters without bringing in his name). Thomas was ready to enter into an engagement by which the great pianist could make a tour of the country with his orchestra, and play on any piano he pleased, from an antique six and a half octave Stein, which tinkled in the ears of a generation back, to a—no, we can not commit ourselves on this vital question. But the young conductor coupled his consent with the single, and, it seems to us, not unreasonable condition, that the pianist should play at one of his Symphony Concerts, at Steinway Hall, where they had always been held. The pickets rallied on the reserve, and reported an attack imminent. A bulletin from the extreme front announced that the signal-officer had seen a Steinway banner advancing on General Von Bulow. The reserve was reinforced and skirmishers were thrown forward. At this juncture a messenger, bearing a flag of truce, desired to know if General Von Bulow was expected to play a Steinway piano in that hall. To which came the frank, and not very unseemly reply, that he could not play anything else there. A council of the combatants to fix another hall for the Symphony Concert at which General Von Bulow was to play, broke up without a satisfactory conclusion. "Well," said Major-General Chickering, "if he plays in Steinway Hall, he can not use a Steinway piano." "Very well," replied Major-General Thomas, "then we can not conclude the treaty;" and, striking his spurs into his horse-fiddle, he galloped off over the country, leaving General Von Bulow to get along the best he could—and it was a very poor *best*—without him. The Steinway banner was hauled down, and the troops were disbanded. Order reigns, and Von Bulow, with a full hand (of keys), goes it alone.

The old time-honored New York Philharmonic, venerable from age, and deserving of undying fame for the good it has done in the past, has held sway at the Academy of Music. Through long delay in making up its schedule, its concerts have sometimes occurred on the same evening with the Thomas Symphony Concerts—to the pecuniary detriment of the former. The Philharmonic has suffered, and still suffers, by comparison with the concerts just named; and while Thomas is playing to larger houses than ever before, the other, and much older organization, has less prosperity than formerly. No musician can hear this without genuine and heartfelt regret. The cities of New York and Brooklyn, which are practically one great metropolis of a million and a half souls, can support two orchestras organized and conducted as is Thomas's. The Philharmonic can never expect to rival Thomas, until it is remodeled and carried on on the same basis.

Although Italian opera has languished, the English has had a good success. It is quite worthy of note,